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ABSTRACT

The author presents perceptions of the world of sport and physical education gained during a study-tour of the Soviet Union in 1977. This broad overview of individual and governmental involvement in physical activities includes the following--a survey of physical education and public participation in sport in tsarist Russia, governmental policy immediately following the October Revolution, physical education requirements and general goals in the school system, the "pioneer club" facilities for youth, sport societies for workers, professional preparation for teachers and sport specialists, research efforts at the Central Institute of Physical Culture of the Order of Lenin (including a curriculum profile), and other research laboratories for physical culture and sport. (MJB)

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PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT IN THE SOVIET UNION

Introduction

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics covers an area of 8,649,489 square miles amounting to one-sixth of the surface of the globe and bordering on twelve countries. It extends over one-third of Asia and half of Europe, including nine climatic regions. Politically, the Soviet Union consists of fifteen Union republics with a total population of 259 million of which 60% is urbanized, 43% Russian and 57% non-Russian nationalities (10). In the Soviet Union, there are 169 different races, nationalities and tribes speaking 150 different languages or dialects (11).

Before the October Socialist Revolution of 1917, three quarters of the population was illiterate, therefore, after the revolution the Communist Party did everything possible to establish all kinds of educational institutions in order to teach Marxism-Leninism and internationalism (8). The Education Act of 1958 provided for eight years of compulsory schooling for children and the number of languages used in schools was limited to 40 (7).

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*The Institute of Comparative Physical Education was established by Dr. Edmund Enos in April, 1973 as a subsection of the Department of Bio-Physical Education at Loyola Campus, Concordia University in Montreal, Canada and has gained international recognition for the innovative approach and academic excellence in comparative physical education and sports. The institute offers a variety of study-tour courses.

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All school systems in the Soviet Union consist of nursery, kindergarten and primary schools although grade groupings differ in encompassing the first through the tenth grades. Primary and secondary education is free. At age fifteen, the student may elect to leave the traditional school and enter a vocational school. There are also specialized secondary schools, special institutes, colleges and universities.

Background-physical education

Physical education in tsarist Russia was very limited and sports participation was mainly enjoyed by the ruling and/or wealthy classes. Pyoto Franzevich Lesgaft (4) contributed greatly to the development of modern physical education in Russia. He not only developed physical education programs for military academies, but also published many articles. Due to his efforts, the government established civilian physical training courses for men and women instructors in 1896. Furthermore, he strongly believed in women's sporting rights and taught physical culture* and anatomy to women. He is now considered the Father of Russian Physical Education (4). After the October Revolution, Communist leaders enthusiastically believed that physical culture and sports not only play a major role in the harmonious development of a person but are also necessary for the labor and defense of a nation, and strongly encouraged participation in sports. As a result, physical education became a compulsory subject for all types of schools and today physical education and sports are considered an integral part of the Soviet people's life-style.

In March, 1931, the G.T.O. which is translated as "I am ready for

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*In this paper, the terms physical culture and physical education are used interchangeably.

Labor and Defense", program was developed. This general fitness program was specifically designed for school children from ten to those over sixty years of age and is divided into five different stages with specific exercise items for each category. Norms have been revised every ten years. In 1936, the B.G.T.O. (Be ready for Labor and Defense) program was instituted. Both programs are a national effort to involve people in physical fitness and sports proficiency programs. These physical fitness test programs have played a significant role in maintaining good fitness for the populace of the country. Scientifically constructed test items are administered at regular intervals and a series of colored sports badges and pins are awarded according to the level of achievement. Russians are very proud to wear these pins. The GTO program helps to attract children to sports participation at an early age and is also helpful for military training since GTO test items include grenade throwing and rifle shooting (7).

Physical education is a required course and from the first through the tenth grade, in all schools, students participate two hours per week (3). In institutions of higher learning, physical education is required during the freshman and sophomore years and is an elective for upper division students. The basic goal of school physical education is to keep students trim and physically fit. The content of school physical education programs in the Soviet Union is very similar to those in the United States. However, physical fitness, track and field, gymnastics, combative sports and modern gymnastics are emphasized. Individual activities and play are not regularly given much attention.

Most Russian school children actively participate in sports after school hours. A system of Pioneer Palaces are available where children ages 10-14 participate in sports and cultural programs. There are approximately

4,000 pioneer club facilities in the USSR. Children who possess outstanding potential are encouraged to join one of the available sports clubs where each receive 90 to 120 minutes of training (coaching) per session. Others are encouraged to enroll in exclusive sports schools in which concentration is upon one sport (2). There are 212 thousand sports clubs with 50 million members. At sports clubs, coaches and trainers scientifically evaluate children's sports performance and recruit Olympic potentials for sports boarding schools. The first sports boarding school was opened in 1962. There are now 32 sports boarding schools in the USSR. Students study general academic subjects and undertake intensive sports training for as much as 5 hours daily. These schools offer 48 month courses. The faculty consists of a number of specialists who hold doctoral degrees in the Science of Physical Education and Coaching. Many have been Olympic champions. At present, there are approximately 66 sports available for participants in the Soviet Union with track and field, volleyball, football (soccer) and skiing being the most popular. Sambo wrestling, a combination of judo and wrestling, and modern gymnastics were developed by Russians. Car racing, motorcycle racing, scuba diving, parachuting and gliding are also popular sports (10).

In the Soviet Union, sports play a vital role in the lives of working people. The government provides facilities, equipment and coaching and encourages participation in sports activities. The trade unions, composed of 19 societies with 24 million members, are very active in promoting and leading the sports movements. Popular sports societies are DYNAMO (security police) and SPARTAK (for civil service, workers in health, communications, etc.), BUREVESTNIK (for high school students), LABOR RESERVE

(vocational students), LOKOMOTIVE (for railway workers), VODNIK (for river transportation workers) and the CENTRAL ARMY SPORTS CLUB (for military personnel). The annual fee is only 30 kopecks (equivalent to 40 cents in U.S. currency) which entitles members to the benefits identified above.

There are approximately 3,000 stadia, 60,000 gymnasia and over 100,000 football fields in the Soviet Union. The Russians claim that if these facilities were all utilized simultaneously, accommodation would encompass between 25-30 million sportsmen and women. There are an estimated 20 million athletes in the USSR. There will be 78,000 gymnasia available by the time the 1980 Olympic games begin (10).

Professional Preparation

Before 1917, the Soviet Union had only 105 institutions of higher learning. However, at the present time there are 853 such institutions in 500 cities. There are four basic types of institutions for higher learning; namely, 63 universities, 68 poly-technical institues, 200 teachers colleges, and over 500 specialized institutes, including 23 institutes of physical education (9). Administratively, higher education in the Soviet Union is controlled and supervised by the Ministry of Higher Specialized Secondary Education (6), and all sports activities are supervised by the Central Sports Committee of the USSR. This committee is responsible for (I) Games, (II) Winter Sports, (III) Soccer, (IV) International Sports, (V) the Physical Culture Institutes and (VI) a Special Science Section which is responsible for developing scientific coaching programs (1).

Professional physical education preparation programs are conducted by four different educational institutions which include 84 pedagogical institutes, 23 institutes of physical culture, 25 specialized secondary schools and 10 coaching schools.

Pedagogical institutes primarily train physical education teachers for secondary schools while institutes of physical culture usually prepare both teachers and sport specialists. Each institute is structured to accommodate physical education and sports from the neophyte stage to the highly competitive international competitions. Specialized secondary schools train primary school physical education teachers. Schools for sport specialists are affiliated with institutes of physical culture. Programs at institutes of physical culture are considered the best and most prestigious in the country. Among the 23 institutes of physical culture, the Central Institute of Physical Culture in Moscow is considered the most advanced.

The Central Institute of Physical Culture of the Order of Lenin

This institute was founded by Lenin in 1920 and is located in Moscow. It is under the leadership of Rector, Professor V. Maslov and is made up of 30 departments with 400 professors (52% having Doctor of Science degrees) and a staff of 1,200. The total enrollment of 7,000 is comprised of approximately 2,000 full-time students, 80% male and 20% female, and 5,000 part-time students, plus corresponding students. This institute offers a 4 year undergraduate program leading to a diploma (6 years for correspondent students) and 2 years of post graduate study leading to a Masters of Sports in the chosen sport. The institute prepares physical education teachers and coaches who specialize in one sport. Emphasis is upon the latter. Special programs are also available for graduates who wish to periodically update knowledge and skill. Most return for a month every few years.

Admission standards for the institute are very high and each applicant must finish the ten year secondary and/or specialized secondary school program and must pass an entrance examination which includes biology, chemistry,

Russian language and proficiency in a chosen sport. Many students have prepared at specialized sports schools prior to being admitted to the institute. It accepts many highly ranked sportsmen and women. The institute offers two major programs; namely, the Education Diploma Course and the Sports Diploma Course. The curricula are very similar, however, the former is basically for teachers and the latter is for specialist-coaches.

Curriculum consists of the following: (12)

A. General Courses

History of the Communist Party
Philosophy of Communism
Scientific Atheism
Political Economy
Scientific Communism
Foreign Language
Civil Defense

C. Professional Courses

Introduction to Sport Speciality
Biomechanics and Sport Training
Sports Psychology
Hygiene
Sports Massage
Pedagogics and History
Theory and Method in Physical Educ.
Foundations of Sports Training
Biometry
Statistics
History of Sports
Organization and Administration
Sports Installations
Photography and Filming
Theory of Teaching (chosen sport)
Psychological Preparation of Athletes
Improving Physical Performance
Age-biochemistry of Sports
High Mathematics
Ethics
Research
Aesthetics

B. Science Courses

Sports Physiology
Biochemistry of Sport
Anatomy
Sport Morphology
Sports Medicine
Pathology and Medical Control

D. Professional Courses - Seminars

Biodynamics of Sports Activity
Physiological Characteristics of Different Sports
Medical-Pedagogical Control

E. Activity Courses

Gymnastics
Track and Field
Swimming
Sports Games
Skiing
Weight Lifting

F. Practical Work Participation

(1) Teaching and practice-experience: Summer, winter and special sports camps.
(2) Student teaching:
Secondary school-one month
Special Sports School - one month
Sports Club - one month in senior year.

G. Additional Requirements

--Participation in a chosen sport (300 hours).
--Passing of 4th stage of GTO.
--First or second sports ranking in chosen sport.
--Referee certifications in two other sports.
--Thesis for graduation.

H. State Examination

In order to graduate from the institute each student must pass a state examination which consists of:

1. Scientific Communism
2. Physiology
3. Specialization

Facilities, supplies and equipment are plentiful and each of the twenty-eight sports offered at the Institute has a specially equipped gymnasium. Faculty departments have been developed which are responsible for only one sport from the beginning to expert level. Interestingly, there is a Hall of Olympic Games on the seventh floor of the Institute where significant records of the modern Olympic games are displayed with emphasis upon records held by Russian athletes.

The library is well stocked and textbooks are very inexpensive. A full-size rifle range is also available for instruction and competition.

Research

In 1948, the Central Committee of the USSR passed a resolution to enter international sports competitions. Since then, research in physical education and sports has been actively developed, and is a vital part of sports education in the Soviet Union. Every institute of physical culture has its own research lab which are available and accessible to students and faculty. The research laboratory at the Central Institute is well equipped and contains a variety of scientific instrumentation. Selected U.S. university labs contain the same equipment. The difference is in the fact that the Soviets have concentrated their athletes and coaches and rely upon the institute for research testing, experimentation and advice

on a regular basis. At the Central Institute, undergraduate students engage in experimental research under their professor's direction.

There are many research laboratories for physical culture and sports in the USSR. However, a Research Institute in Kiev is the best known for medical and biological problems associated with physical culture and sports. Interestingly, the sociology of sports is a relatively new academic discipline in the USSR, the first book having been published in 1972. Among publications in physical education and sports, The Journal of Theory and Practice of Physical Culture is considered of highest quality in the USSR. The government has awarded gold medals and financial rewards to outstanding researchers in physical education and sports since 1973.(5)

Conclusions

The following conclusions are based upon lectures presented by the faculty and the observations made by the author at the Central Institute in the summer of 1977. Basically, the Russians believe that physical culture and sports play a major role in the harmonious development of a person and that sports education is needed both for labor and defense. Elite Soviet athletes are produced by special sports schools and institutes of physical culture with the strong support of the people and the government. Introduction of sports at an early age is given great importance, in order to produde outstanding international competitors. Russians participate in sports in order to attain physical perfection, recognition and security. The Soviets are working hard to bridge the gap between research findings and immediate practical application. Coaches and teachers are being taught to apply only scientifically validated principles and methods. Physical education and sports are placed high on the list of national priorities and supported strongly by the government. No professional sports programs

exist but selected athletes are given considerable support and encouragement. Attention is directed to top level competition the year around. International competitions are regularly scheduled and emphasized. Such regular competitions, obviously, make for capable and experienced Olympic teams and International sports competitors.

The students, practitioners and administrators who participated in the study-tour received as much of an in-depth experience related to physical education and sport as the Soviets allow.

The three words that best describe the Soviet effort in sports are specialization, concentration and application.

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